

Hope for the Discouraged and Depressed, Part 6 - Romans 8:22-27 – April 22nd, 2012

- Today's teaching will be part six of a series titled; "Hope for the Discouraged and Depressed."
- What we're about to see in what we just read, is how we can be both joyful and hopeful in the midst of a very distressed, and depressed world.
- We see our first one in verses twenty-two and twenty-three where the Apostle Paul describes this longing and even groaning for our redemption.

1. Longing for Jesus to come (Verses 22-23)

(22) We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (23) Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
-v22 Paul writes how that we know the whole creation has been groaning like a woman who is experiencing birth pains up to the present time.
-v23 He says not only that but we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan inwardly eagerly awaiting our adoption as our bodies are redeemed.
- In other words, the whole of God's creation over all of human history has had this built in groaning and longing for adoption and redemption.

- When Paul says that we who have the first fruits of the Spirit, what he is saying is that we as Christians have had the first taste of heaven.
- Those of us who have tasted of the Lord and seen that He is good are actually groaning and longing for heaven even more so because of it.
- The closer we get to that day when Jesus takes us out of this decaying and dying world the more hope we'll have while we're still in this world.

- I find it interesting that Paul, by the Holy Spirit, draws the comparison of creation outwardly with us as believers inwardly both groaning together.
- At first glance this may seem a little odd until you realize that since the fall at the beginning of creation, there has been a longing for redemption.

Isaiah 55:12 NKJV "For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands.

- That's not to say that trees have souls that need to be redeemed rather, what it does say is God's creation as a whole longs to be redeemed.
- We see this echoed when Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and rebuked by the Pharisees telling him to rebuke His disciples.

Luke 19:40 NIV "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

- The bottom line is that the fall has taken a toll even on creation, which is why we like creation groan together. Consider 2 Corinthians 5:1-5.

2 Corinthians 5:1-5 NIV (1) Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. (2) Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, (3) because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. (4) For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. (5) Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

2. Waiting for Jesus to come (Verses 24-25)

(24) For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? (25) But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.
-v24 Paul says that it's in this hope we were saved, however, hope that we see is not really hope because nobody hopes for what he already has.
-v25 He goes on to say that if we hope for what we do not yet have, we'll wait for it patiently knowing that soon we'll have that which we hope for.
- It's been said that man can only live a matter of days without food or water, but he is unable to live even a matter of a few seconds without hope.

A number of years ago researchers performed an experiment to see the effect of hope on those in hardship. Two sets of laboratory rats were placed in separate tubs of water. The researchers left one set in the water and found that within an hour they had all drowned. The other rats were periodically lifted out of the water and then returned. When that happened, the second set of rats swam for over 24 hours. Why? Not because they were given a rest, but because they suddenly had hope! Those rats somehow hoped if they could stay afloat just a little longer, someone would reach down and save them. If hope holds such power for unthinking rodents, how much greater should its effect be on our lives.

As one so poignantly put it; "For the believer, there are no hopeless situations; there are only people who have grown hopeless about situations."

- That's why Paul says what he says about waiting patiently for that which we do not yet have namely, adoption and the redemption of our bodies.
- In a sense, Paul is painting a most beautiful portrait of hope on the canvass of our temporal lives, with the colors of what awaits us eternally.

William Newell in his commentary on Romans said it best this way; "This scene is deeply touching. One who, redeemed, belongs in heaven, yet kept in a body in which he groans with groaning creation. Then—amazing goodness! the blessed Spirit, we may say, represents God's tender feeling toward His creation, abiding, as He does, in us the while our bodies are not redeemed. We repeat and repeat that the Christian's hope is not disembodiment, or mere "going to heaven." For, knowing that "our citizenship is in heaven; we patiently wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. ...This places us, along with all creation, in hope. For, as verse 24 announces, unto [a state of] hope were we saved. There is a longing for and expectation of something better, no matter what spiritual blessing comes to the believer."

3. Praying for Jesus to come (Verses 26-27)

(26) In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. (27) And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

- v26 Paul says the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses by interceding with groans that words can't express, when we don't know what to pray for.
- v27 He says that He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for us in accordance with God's will.
- By the way, have you noticed a common denominator, in that creation groans, we groan, and even the Holy Spirit groans when He intercedes?

Again, William Newell says it best this way; "Groanings"—what a word! and to be used of the Spirit of the Almighty Himself! How shallow is our appreciation of what is done, both by Christ for us, and by the Spirit within us!

- This begs the question of why such groaning? I believe the answer is in accordance with His will we were created to be with Him in Heaven.
- This explains why the Holy Spirit Who is within us, intercedes for us, that His Kingdom come and His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

One commentator captured this, writing; "Only by the Spirit do we know to pray 'Your kingdom come.'" Only by the Spirit do we know that the pain of a messed-up world is labor pains rather than death-throes, that we really can pray in confident hope for the new creation and the redemption of our bodies."

- I'll close by answering a question you may be asking yourself as it relates to the "how" of hope. In other words how can hope come in this way?
- Perhaps better asked in this way; "how is it that hope can come in the present, by longing, waiting, and praying for Jesus to come in the future?"
- For the answer to this, I would like to share with you a story that I believe both illustrates and demonstrates how we can have that kind of hope.

One night at dinner a man, who had spent many summers in Maine, fascinated his companions by telling of his experiences in a little town named Flagstaff. The town was to be flooded, as part of a large lake for which a dam was being built. In the months before it was to be flooded, all improvements and repairs in the whole town were stopped. What was the use of painting a house if it were to be covered with water in six months? Why repair anything when the whole village was to be wiped out? So, week-by-week, the whole town became more and more run down, and in a depressing state of disrepair had gone from bad to worse. Then he added by way of explanation: "Where there is no faith in the future, there is no hope in the present."

[Jeremiah 29:11 NIV](#) For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.